

PETITION

Mail Stop Patent Application
Commissioner for Patents
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Your Petitioner, Jason M. Luetkenhaus, a citizen of the United States of America and resident of the State of Nebraska, whose residence and mailing address is 3266 South 131st Circle, Omaha, Nebraska 68144, prays that Letters Patent Protection be granted to him for an

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR DISCRETELY AND SECURELY SENDING AND RECEIVING MESSAGES ON POST CARDS

as set forth in the following specification:

Cross-Reference to Related Application

This application claims priority to the filing date of related provisional patent application serial No. 60/417,961 filed October 11, 2002.

Background of the Invention

1. Technical Field

The present invention relates to an apparatus for securely mailing post cards through the mail, and more particularly, to a post card message cover which includes a generally rectangular opaque cover plate sized to fit onto and cover one side of a post card and the message written thereon, the post card message cover being securely attached to the post card in generally parallel contact therewith by at least one adhesive strip and a message revealing panel section of the cover plate formed as an interconnected set of perforation lines which are separable along the lines to permit the message revealing panel section to be

1 opened and lifted from the cover plate to reveal the message
2 written on the post card.

4 **2. Description of the Prior Art**

5 Post cards are a common form communication between people
6 today. Typically they are used to send brief personal messages to
7 friends and family while traveling away from home. A problem with
8 post cards, however, is the inability to send messages discretely
9 and securely through the mail. The reason is the sender usually
10 writes their message on one side of the post card and then drops it
11 in the nearest mailbox. Consequently, anyone who then handles that
12 particular post card is capable of reading the confidential and/or
13 personal message written thereon, which is undesirable. Currently,
14 then, users of post cards must then resign themselves to having
15 their message read by any number of people involved in the
16 transport of mail.

17 Various methods proposed in the prior art include the folding
18 over of portions of the post card to protect the message written
19 thereon and/or including a built-in flap or the like which may be
20 folded over the message once the message is written on the post
21 card to prevent unauthorized viewing of the message written
22 thereon. While each of these prior art devices include some
23 advantages, it is also clear that they include inherent
24 disadvantages which have yet to be addressed and solved. For
25 example, the folding of a post card may result in damage to the
26 post card or render it unacceptable for mailing and the use of
27 various types of covering flaps which are integral to the post card
28 may make the post card more difficult to display, sell, or

1 transport through the mail. There is therefore a need for an easy-
2 to-use method and apparatus which allows a sender of a post card to
3 discretely and securely send the message printed thereon.

4 Therefore, an object of the present invention is to provide an
5 apparatus and method for discretely and securely sending and
6 receiving messages on post cards.

7 Another object of the present invention is to provide a post
8 card message cover which includes a generally rectangular opaque
9 cover plate sized to fit on and cover one side of a post card and
10 the message written thereon, the post card message cover being
11 securely attached to the post card in generally parallel contact
12 therewith by at least one adhesive strip.

13 Another object of the present invention is to provide an
14 apparatus and method for discretely and securely sending and
15 receiving messages on post cards which includes a message-revealing
16 panel section of the cover plate which is separable from the
17 remaining portion of the post card message cover to permit the
18 opening and lifting of the message-revealing panel section from the
19 cover plate to reveal the message written on the post card.

20 Another object of the present invention is to provide an
21 apparatus and method for discretely and securely sending and
22 receiving messages on post cards which may be quickly and easily
23 applied to various types and sizes of post cards, yet will still
24 provide coverage for the message printed thereon.

25 Another object of the present invention is to provide an
26 apparatus and method for discretely and securely sending and
27 receiving messages on post cards which may be packaged separately
28 from the post card, yet may be quickly and easily applied thereto.

1 Finally, an object of the present invention is to provide an
2 apparatus and method for discretely and securely sending and
3 receiving messages on post cards which is relatively simple to
4 manufacture and is safe, efficient, and discreet in use.

1 **Summary of the Invention**

2 The present invention provides an apparatus for discretely and
3 securely sending and receiving messages on post cards which
4 includes a generally flat planar post card message cover having an
5 inner face and an outer face and including a generally rectangular
6 generally opaque cover plate sized to fit onto and cover one side
7 of a post card and the message written thereon. At least one
8 adhesive device such as an adhesive strip is mounted on the inner
9 face of the post card message cover for securely attaching the post
10 card message cover to a post card in generally parallel contact
11 therewith with the inner face of the post card message cover
12 adjacent the post card. Finally, the post card message cover
13 further includes a generally opaque message revealing panel section
14 positioned on the post card message cover, the message revealing
15 panel section operative to removably cover a message printed on the
16 post card, the message revealing panel section being movable
17 between a message covering position releasably connected and
18 aligned generally coplanar with the post card message cover and a
19 message revealing position permitting viewing of a message printed
20 on the post card.

21 It is thus seen that the present invention provides a
22 substantial improvement over those inventions found in the prior
23 art. For example, many of the devices found in the prior art
24 address only the issue of covering the message to prevent
25 unauthorized viewing, but do not address the issues of ease of use
26 and ability of the completed assembly to be mailed for the same
27 cost of mailing the post card by itself. Furthermore, as the
28 present invention is relatively simple and inexpensive in

1 manufacture and is durable in use, the user may purchase the
2 message cover for little money and quickly apply and use the cover
3 of the present invention as opposed to the methods of application
4 required by many of the devices found in the prior art. Finally,
5 because the present invention may be sold separately from the post
6 cards themselves, a purchaser need not choose only those post cards
7 fitted with the privacy-enhancing cover of the present invention,
8 but instead may choose any particular post card and then after
9 writing the message thereon, apply the message cover of the present
10 invention prior to mailing to ensure the security of the message.
11 The present invention thus provides a substantial improvement over
12 the prior art.

1 **Brief Description of the Drawings**

2 Figure 1 is a front elevational view of the present invention
3 showing the features thereof.

4 Figure 2 is a rear elevational view of the present invention
5 showing the features on the rear thereof.

6 Figure 3 is a perspective view showing the present invention
7 in use as it reveals the message displayed on the post card.

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Description of the Preferred Embodiment

The post card message cover **10** of the present invention is shown best in Figures **1-3** as including a generally rectangular cover plate **12** which, in the preferred embodiment, would be formed of paper, plastic, or another such generally flexible and inexpensive material which is opaque in order to prevent viewing of the message contents prior to opening of the cover plate **12**. The cover plate **12** would preferably have dimensions approximately equal to the size of the post card **50** on which it is to be mounted in order to completely cover the message side **52** of the post card **50**. Of course, it is not critical that the cover plate **12** cover the entire message side **52** of post card **50** so long as the cover plate **12** is capable of covering the written message **54** on the message side **52** of post card **50** and preventing unauthorized reading thereof. It is further preferred that cover plate **12** also include sections adapted for printing of the destination address **14**, the return address **16**, and postage **18**, all of which would be printed on the front side **20** of cover plate **12** as shown best in Figure **1**, although such printing is not necessary to the functionality of the present invention.

The rear side **22** of cover plate **12** is best shown in Figure **2** as including a plurality of adhesive strips **24a**, **24b**, **24c**, and **24d** which are mounted to the rear side **22** on the periphery thereof. The adhesive strips **24a-d** would preferably be constructed of an adhesive tape or glue substance and are covered with protective strips **26a**, **26b**, **26c**, and **26d** which cover the adhesive strips **24a-d** prior to the cover plate **12** being affixed to the post card **50**, thus preventing the adhesive strips **24a-d** from affixing to materials

1 prior to installation. Of course, the adhesive strips **24a-d** may be
2 of any acceptable size and shape so long as the adhesive function
3 of the strips are maintained, and in fact, in another preferred
4 embodiment, the adhesive strips **24a-d** would be a single continuous
5 strip running along the periphery of the cover plate **12**. The
6 protective strips **26a-d** would then be replaced with a single,
7 unitary protective strip or sheet covering the unitary adhesive
8 strip which would be removable with a single peeling/removing
9 motion, thus saving time and effort in the preparatory stages prior
10 to application of the cover plate **12** to the post card **50**.

11 Cover plate **12** further includes a message revealing panel
12 section **30** which is formed by a series of perforations **32** which
13 extend through the cover plate **12** as shown best in Figures **1** and **2**.
14 It is preferred that the perforations **32** extend in a generally
15 continuous, generally rectangular form as shown best in Figure **2**,
16 with a thumb slot **34** formed in the series of perforations **32** to
17 facilitate the separation of the message revealing panel section **30**
18 from the remainder of cover plate **12** along perforations **32**. The
19 perforations **32** are formed in any appropriate manner, such as by
20 scoring, cutting or crimping the cover plate **12** via a mechanical
21 device such as those presently used in the art.

22 The post card message cover **10** of the present invention would
23 be used in the following manner. The sender of the post card **50**
24 would write message **54** on post card **50** on the message side **52**
25 thereof. The post card message cover **10** would then be applied to
26 the post card **50** by removing the protective strips **26a-d** from
27 adhesive strips **24a-d**, thus revealing the adhesive tape material on
28 the rear side **22** of cover plate **12**. The cover plate **12** would then

1 be affixed to the post card **50** as shown best in Figure **3** such that
2 the written message **54** is covered by cover plate **12** and the
3 adhesive strips **24a-d** secure the cover plate **12** to the message side
4 **52** of post card **50** in generally parallel alignment therewith. The
5 sender would then include the destination address **14**, return
6 address **16**, and postage **18** on the front side **20** of cover plate **12**
7 and send the post card **50** as would be done with an ordinary,
8 unsecured post card.

9 Upon receiving the post card **50**, the recipient of the post
10 card would grasp the post card/cover plate combination with their
11 thumb placed adjacent thumb slot **34**. By bending the cover plate **12**
12 and post card **50**, several of the perforations **32** adjacent thumb
13 slot **34** would be opened and the recipient of the post card **50** would
14 then grasp the message revealing panel section **30** and separate the
15 section **30** from cover plate **12** along the perforations **32** while the
16 remainder of the cover plate **12** remains affixed to the post card
17 **50**. In this manner the written message **54** of the post card **50**
18 would be revealed.

19 It is to be understood that numerous modifications,
20 substitutions, and additions may be made to the post card message
21 cover **10** of the present invention which fall within the intended
22 broad scope of the preceding disclosure. For example, the size,
23 shape and construction materials used in connection with the
24 present invention may be modified and/or changed so long as the
25 operative characteristics of the invention are neither degraded nor
26 destroyed. Furthermore, the exact size and shape of the message
27 revealing panel section **30** is not critical to the invention so long
28 as the written message on the post card is revealed when the panel

1 section **30** is removed. Finally, although the present invention has
2 been described for use with post cards, the present invention may
3 be used in any situation where a degree of security or
4 confidentiality is desired with an exposed message-bearing surface.

5 There has therefore been shown and described a method and
6 apparatus for securely and discretely sending and receiving
7 messages on post cards which accomplishes at least all of its
8 intended objectives.